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MONTHLY REVIEW

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LESSONS OF THE 1988 ELECTIONS
The Editors

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND ECONOMIC INSTABILITY
Arthur MacEwan

APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY
George Ovitt, Jr.

MARXISM AND LITERATURE
F.O. Matthiessen

A COUPLE OF RADICALS
Anne Braden

VOL. 40
9

DITORS . . . PAUL M. SWEEZY . . . HARRY MAGDOFF

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CONTENTS VOLUME 40 NUMBER 9 FEBRUARY 1989

REVIEW OF THE MONTH: Lessons of the 1988 Elections 1

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND ECONOMIC INSTABILITY
by Arthur MacEwan 10

APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY: DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE
by George Ovitt, Jr. 22

RELIGION AND SOCIALISM by Frederick Hastings Smyth 35

MARXISM AND LITERATURE by F.O. Matthiessen 45

CORRESPONDENCE:
"International Cooperation—A Way Out?": A Comment by Kathleen Gough 48
Wolff and Resnick Defended by Ronald Chicote 53

BOOKS:
A Couple of Radicals by Anne Braden 55

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

Sometimes important events are hardly visible when they occur, either because they are small at the outset or because they are underplayed by the media. We are thinking of the general strike that took place in Spain on December 14th. Small it wasn't, but underplayed certainly. According to *The New York Times* (December 15), "A one-day strike brought commerce, industry, and transportation throughout Spain to a standstill today. Defying pleas by Prime Minister Felipe González to negotiate rather than strike, nearly eight million workers out of a work force of ten million stayed off the job, at a cost estimated by Mr. González at $3 billion." A sensational story, one would think. But *The Times* put it on an inside page and omitted the kind of "news analysis" that often accompanies important developments. It used to be, as Marx once remarked, that radical awakenings in Europe were announced by the crowing of the Gallic cock. Could it be that the announcer of good news has now moved across the border to Spain? Time will tell, but meanwhile it is worth noting that conditions in Spain and the failure of the government to take effective remedial action are by no means confined to that country. What underlies this kind of worker militance was concisely summed up in the very last sentence of the *Times* report: "Unemployment among youth in Spain is 40 percent and the overall rate is 19 percent, the highest in

(Continued on inside back cover)

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LESSONS OF THE 1988 ELECTIONS

The political situation in the United States today, if one takes the trouble to look below the surface, is very strange indeed. The most important fact is that the country could easily produce at least 50 percent more than it is now producing: this is a conservative estimate based on wartime experience and the current state of underutilization of available labor power and productive capacity. Total production (GNP) now stands at $4.9 trillion. To be even more conservative, let us say that within the next few years output could be increased by an annual amount of $2 trillion (two thousand billion dollars). If this increase in production were channelled into producing the things people need, like housing, health care, social security, etc., there would be enough to enable the entire citizenry to lead decent and secure lives with a lot left over to begin tackling the enormous tasks facing the country as a result of generations of neglect, waste, and destruction—tasks like repairing and expanding the nation's infrastructure, rebuilding decayed inner cities, and cleaning up an environment that is now being poisoned and depleted at a clearly unsustainable rate.

If the people of this country understood this situation, if the powers that be represented by the media and the two major political parties explained it to them and put forward, either jointly or separately in competition with each other, programs designed to secure for the nation the improvements and benefits that are now clearly within reach, can there be any doubt that the response would be overwhelmingly favorable? Voters would surely turn out in unprecedented numbers, and candidates who refused to pledge their loyal cooperation would be ignominiously defeated.

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So much for what could be. What actually is, of course, is quite different. The Democratic and Republican parties, both of which are controlled by and represent the interests of business and business-oriented people (i.e., capital), believe that the present crisis of U.S. capitalism is caused by "living beyond our means." Far from being in a position to improve its standard of living and tackle the accumulated problems of past neglect, the country is supposed to be faced with the need for retrenchment and a period of austerity during which we should pay off our debts and prepare for a struggle to survive in an increasingly competitive world. Where these ideas come from is a complicated question, especially since they fly in the face of the historical experience of the last fifty years, but it is not one we need to try to answer here. For present purposes it is sufficient to recognize that these ideas are part and parcel of an ideology of a kind that ruling classes regularly generate in order to nationalize and protect what they perceive to be (and for the most part really believe to be) the general interest. In the present case, the purpose or function of the ideology in question is to convince the people—especially the 75 percent or so who depend for their livelihood on their wages or salaries (or their pensions, unemployment insurance, or welfare payments)—that they must accept whatever hardships the crisis imposes on them and be prepared for further sacrifices for the common good. (Remember Camelot's ringing injunction: Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.)

Against this background, the 1988 elections and the campaigns that preceded them can be seen in their proper historical setting. The two major political parties performed exactly as you would expect. They carefully avoided any serious analysis of the crisis inherited from the previous eight years of what candidate and now President George Bush back in 1980 had called "voodoo economics," obviously with a thoroughly pejorative intent. Bush for his part now purports to believe that the country, far from being in a crisis, has been enjoying an extended spell of "peace and prosperity" which could be indefinitely extended under his more-of-the-same policies. If

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Dukakis disagrees, he was careful not to make too much of it, contenting himself with relatively mild criticism of his rival's more reactionary positions and keeping his own proposals well within the confines of the mainstream consensus. Nothing revealed the real character of the Dukakis campaign better than his avowal in his acceptance speech that the issue between him and his opponent was one of competence, not ideology.

With one exception, to which we will shortly return, the campaigns and the elections remained firmly anchored within this mainstream consensus; and the outcome, a Republican president and a Democratic Congress, continues what has by now come to be considered as a well established tradition. It is important to understand that this sharing of power reflects a deeply rooted reality. The parties have the same purpose, to preserve capitalism and serve the interests of its ruling class, but they go about it somewhat differently. Generally speaking, the Republicans appeal to the upper half of the income distribution and the Democrats to the lower half. They are engaged in a common enterprise which, however, requires a division of labor for its successful management. It is therefore fitting and for the most part satisfactory to both parties that they should share the rewards.*

The one exception to all this harmony and cooperation, of course, was the candidacy of Jesse Jackson in the Democratic primaries. Jackson tried with considerable success to inject crucial (i.e., class) issues into the campaign. True, he was very cautious in doing so, never raising the issue broached above in the opening paragraph of the real productive potential of the U.S. economy, and tacitly accepting the immutability of capitalism and its basic institutional structures. But within these (severe) limitations, he did manage to convey the message that many significant improvements and benefits—in such areas as jobs, housing, health care, and elementary standards of fairness and social justice—are feasible and can be achieved through

*It should never be forgotten that in the U.S. system as it has evolved, political office at every level is the source of direct and indirect financial benefits and emoluments fully commensurate with the wealth of the country as a whole and its various political subdivisions.

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mass mobilization and political action. Moreover, his message got through to wide strata of the population all over the country, attracting the second largest number of votes of the Democratic candidates and pushing the others to inject populist themes into their own campaigns.

In the context of recent U.S. political history, then, the Jackson campaign was a sensation which for a time seemed likely to move the whole Democratic Party and its presidential candidate far enough to the left to endanger the pro-status quo alliance of Democrats and Republicans, described above. The danger became even more acute with the apparent settling of differences between the Jackson and Dukakis camps at the Atlanta Democratic convention and the conclusion of an agreement between the two which would allow Jackson a very prominent part in the final campaign against the Republicans. Polls at the time gave Dukakis a 17 percentage point lead over Bush: a momentous upheaval in the U.S. political scene seemed about to materialize.

What happened next could provide a field day for conspiracy theorists. Populist themes disappeared from Democratic discourse; Dukakis simply reneged on his Atlanta promises to Jackson; ugly racist allegations and rumors proliferated; the upbeat mood of the Democratic convention evaporated; within the short space of less than two months the seventeen point Dukakis advantage gave way to an equally large lead in favor of Bush; perhaps even more symptomatic of the sharp change was the showing of the polls that an unprecedented two-thirds of the potential voters were turned off by both candidates. The stage was thus set for the lowest voter turnout in decades, a situation always favorable to the more conservative candidate.

All this might be taken as evidence that the bigwigs of the Democratic Party, perhaps joined by a few Republicans as well, got together and decided deliberately to throw the election. And indeed it cannot be denied that something of the kind may actually have occurred. On the other hand, the instinctive revulsion of Democratic leaders and functionaries, high and low, at the prospect of a leftward lurch of their party, plus the unpredictable consequences of what might lie beyond, are

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surely quite sufficient to explain the turnaround that took place in the summer of 1988, assuring the election of Bush and cementing the Democratic-Republican alliance for at least four more years.*

What lessons are to be drawn from the electoral experiences of 1988? Do they prove that the existing two-party system is an insuperable roadblock to any progressive political change? That campaigns like Jesse Jackson's are bound to fail? Or, on the contrary, do they point to a different conclusion, that 1988, considered as a continuation of 1984, shows the way forward on a road that will necessarily be long and marked by setbacks as well as successes?

On the whole we incline to the latter view. Here we will sketch our basic reasons, but inevitably much of the argument and the evidence to support it must await further developments. In this connection we want to emphasize that we expect the present period of relative calm on both the domestic and international fronts to be short-lived. Developments, some of a dramatic character, are likely as early as 1989 or 1990, and they will undoubtedly make a strong impact on the political situation, making necessary a more or less continuous rethinking of prospects and opportunities.

As of now it seems clear to us that the Jackson campaigns of 1984 and 1988 were remarkably successful. They did not emerge and develop within the framework of the Democratic Party, as for example labor (CIO) participation in the New Deal did in the 1930s. Blacks were activated mostly outside the party; and though they voted as Democrats both in the primaries and in November, only a small number were actually absorbed into the party apparatus. In other words, they were a

*It is worth recalling that something similar happened in 1984. The Democratic convention of that year which nominated Mondale was featured by a series of speeches (by Cuomo, Jackson, and Kennedy) that were strongly populist in tone and aroused an enthusiastic response both inside and outside the convention. Polls showed that at the close of the convention, Mondale, who had been trailing Reagan by a wide margin, had pulled even, and hopes were high among progressives that a more populist-oriented campaign from then on might bring a Mondale victory. But nothing of the kind happened; for the Democrats it was all downhill to their humiliating defeat in November.

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force outside the Democratic Party, a fact underlined by the way Jackson was put down and marginalized immediately after the convention. But, and this is a crucially important point, while blacks constituted a majority of Jackson voters, they did not form a constituency devoted specifically to protecting or furthering black interests. The Jackson program was a class program, and the fact that so many Hispanics and whites supported it in the primaries shows conclusively that the movement was a class movement, not a race movement. This means that the movement and the political force it represents is open-ended with, at least in theory, an enormous potential to grow.

The Jackson campaign of 1988 was a success in another respect as well. We argue above that it came close to exploding the status-quo-protecting alliance of Republicans and Democrats. This was an important achievement, if only because it demonstrates, despite surface appearances, how unstable and precarious this alliance is. And it happened at a time when the economy was relatively stable and still expanding. When the next recession comes (see "Anniversary of the Crash" in this space in the November 1988 MR), both the status quo itself, and the political alliance that protects it, will be that much more vulnerable. If the alliance nearly broke down under the pressure of the Jackson campaign, how much more likely is it to do so next time under pressure of a campaign that builds on the Jackson experience, whether under the leadership of Jackson himself or of others who may appear on the political scene as the need and the opportunity grow. This is not to argue that the breakdown of the Democratic-Republican alliance will by itself lead to constructive change. More likely, at least in the short run, it will lead to instability and confusion. But, as in the breakup of a logjam, this will be a step forward, a necessary precondition to a positive political realignment.

If this analysis is correct, what does it indicate about the desirable strategy of progressive and left forces as we enter what is bound to be a period of turbulence, excitement, and opportunity? Here we offer a few suggestions in the hope of stimulating, and contributing to, discussion and debate.

First, we see no reason at this time to fault the basic

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strategy of the 1988 Jackson campaign, which was essentially to use the facilities of the Democratic Party, insofar as it is a quasi-public institution open to all citizens, to put forward a class program (the class in this case comprising the great majority of the whole population) and to attack the status-quo alliance of the Democratic and Republican parties acting in their capacity as private organizations devoted to protecting and furthering the interests of capitalism.

Second, what we think does need rethinking and change is the type of program that should be put forward in the struggle to break out of the straightjacket imposed on the political life of the country by the Democratic-Republican alliance. Above all, it is necessary to open the minds of the masses to the enormous and tragically underutilized potential for meeting human needs that lies ready at hand in this, the most advanced industrial country in the world. It is of course true—and no attempt need be made to hide the fact—that this potential can never be more than partially realized under a system of production for profit. But much more can be done than is now being done, and the program should be specific and emphatic in pointing the way forward. The main block now is the incredible and growing concentration of wealth and income in the hands of a tiny minority of individuals and institutions that have neither the vision not the will to use their power for satisfying urgent human needs. The backbone of a progressive program must therefore be a new fiscal system that reverses the disastrous regressive trends of the last four decades. This, together with a gradual but continuing reduction in the monstrous and increasingly unnecessary military budget, can provide the resources needed for a turnaround in the quantity as well as the composition and quality of the country's civilian spending projects.

On this last subject, the Jackson program of 1988 is a good starting place. What it needs is elaboration in some respects and expansion in others, particularly in the direction of launching the United States on a crusade—nothing less is required—to save our part of the earth, and help others to save theirs, for a livable human future.

Finally, we think the program should as far as possible

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establish links with progressive movements and trends in the country's historical experience, all too often neglected or forgotten in the dismal Reagan/Republican years of reaction. In this connection an auspicious beginning could be made by reviving and focusing attention on the high point of the progressive tide that characterized the Roosevelt/New Deal era of the 1930s and the early 1940s. We refer to the Economic Bill of Rights, which was the centerpiece of FDR's 1944 State of the Union message to the Congress, now deeply buried in the historical archives and probably unknown to the vast majority of the country's citizenry. Here it is, complete with its eloquent introduction:

This Republic had its beginning, and grew to its present strength, under the protection of certain inalienable political rights—among them the right of free speech, free press, free worship, trial by jury, freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures. They were our rights to life and liberty.

As our Nation has grown in size and stature, however—as our industrial economy expanded—these political rights proved inadequate to assure us equality in the pursuit of happiness.

We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. "Necessitous men are not freemen." People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made.

In our day these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all—regardless of station, race, or creed.

Among these are—

The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries, or shops or farms or mines of the Nation;

The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation;

The right of every farmer to raise and sell his products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living;

The right of every businessman, large and small, to trade in

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an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad;

The right of every family to a decent home;

The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health;

The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment;

The right to a good education.

All of these rights spell security. And after this war is won we must be prepared to move forward, in the implementation of these rights, to new goals of human happiness and well-being.

Most of the four and a half decades since this second Bill of Rights was put forward have been years of reaction and regression. Isn't it high time to call a halt and to resume the forward march into a better future?

(December 20, 1988)

PERESTROIKA, AMERICAN STYLE

Ed A. Hewett, an economist at the Brookings Institution in Washington, often tells Soviet colleagues that more turmoil in the economy would be cause for celebration, not alarm. Mr. Hewett says he will believe economic change is serious [in the Soviet Union] when he sees bankruptcies and strikes, the natural upheavals of an economy adjusting to reality.

—*The New York Times*,
December 5, 1988

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND ECONOMIC INSTABILITY

by ARTHUR MacEWAN

In the last few years, the United States has developed a foreign-trade deficit of unprecedented magnitude, and, closely associated with the trade deficit, has become a huge international debtor. In Washington and on Wall Street, these developments are viewed as serious problems, representing both long-term weakness and current instability in the U.S. economy. Moreover, these international economic problems have presented workers in some industries with serious difficulties, as production has been replaced by imports and many people have lost their jobs. Even where jobs have not been lost, wages have been eroded by the ominous threat of "international competition."

These problems have called forth myriad proposals for their solution. Government and business leaders tell us on one day that the roots of the problem are profligacy and lack of competitiveness. The solution is that "we" must both consume less and work harder. On another day, the villain is wicked foreigners, and the solution lies in forcing them to play fairly in the game of international commerce. Within the labor movement and among progressive forces, trade-related problems have given rise to a new wave of protectionist sentiment, to talk of "managed trade," and to proposals for "industrial policy."

The international economic problems of the United States deserve attention, then, both because of what they tell us about

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the state of the economy and because of their relevance to current political debates. The fact of the matter is that the U.S. trade and debt problems have very deep roots in the recent evolution of international capitalism—in changing power relations and in the emergence of stagnation. Particular fiscal and monetary policies of the U.S. government have exacerbated trade and debt difficulties, but those policies have themselves been rooted in the more basic changes.

Changing Patterns of U.S. Trade: The 1970s

In 1971, for the first time in the twentieth century, the United States imported more merchandise than it exported. Up until then, the trade surplus had been an important symbol of U.S. power in the world economy. The shift to a deficit was an equally important symbol of change, and since 1971 all but two years have been deficit years. Figure 1 shows the aggregate U.S. merchandise trade balance for the years 1946 through 1987, and Figure 2 provides a comparison of the trade balance with GNP.

It is useful, however, to look behind these aggregate trade deficit figures and see what is happening on a more detailed level. Through the 1970s, the deficit was accounted for largely by oil and one category of manufactured goods, automobiles. If we look at the trade balance without oil and automobiles, there is no deficit prior to the severe dislocation of the mid-1980s, and, of special importance, there is no downward trend in the balance prior to 1981.

Further disaggregation within manufacturing indicates a highly varied set of experiences, but there is a pattern to the variation. In general, in the 1970s, within manufacturing, the United States ran substantial surpluses in capital goods, chemicals, and military goods, while experiencing deficits in manufactured consumer goods. There had been a change from the earlier postwar period, when there were surpluses in all categories of manufactured goods, but it had not been a change from widespread surpluses to widespread deficits.

What distinguishes consumer goods from other types of

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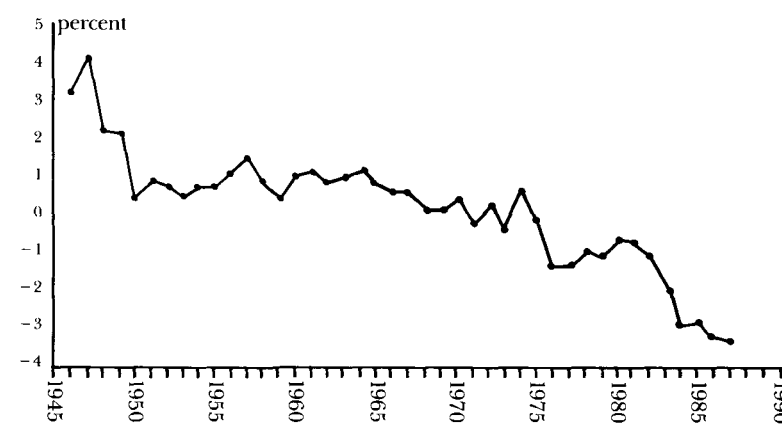
Figure 1
*Merchandise Foreign Trade Balance of the U.S., 1946-87**

Figure 2
*Merchandise Foreign Trade Balance of the U.S. as a Percentage of GNP, 1946-87**



Source: *Economic Report of the President, 1988.*
*The 1987 figure is provisional.

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manufactures is the size of the markets and the nature of the production processes. In general, the market for any given mass consumer good is larger than for other types of manufactured goods. The large market for a standardized product facilitates the development of mass production techniques which make heavy use of relatively unskilled, low-wage labor. Thus, what appears in the changing pattern of trade in the 1970s is a move toward a reliance on foreign sources for production involving a relatively high quantity of low-wage labor.

In addition to these shifts of trade patterns in the 1970s, there was also a substantial increase in the overall importance of international trade for the U.S. economy. Between 1970 and 1980, imports jumped from 3.9 percent of GNP to 9.1 percent and exports from 4.2 percent to 8.2 percent. This rise in the importance of trade—this greater "openness" of the U.S. economy—was set in motion by the dominance of U.S. power during the postwar years which laid the foundation for a more highly integrated international economy. Then, in the late 1960s and 1970s, as postwar recovery was completed abroad, modern facilities came "on-line" in many countries. Foreign firms began to penetrate U.S. markets more effectively, and U.S. firms made more extensive use of their foreign subsidiaries to supply the home market. These changes took place within a context of declining growth rates throughout the world economy and a general intensification of international competition, which led to a greater interpenetration of domestic and foreign markets.

Also, U.S.-based oil companies had been successful in consolidating their control over world energy supplies, integrating the U.S. economy into an international supply network, and skewing the U.S. economy toward heavy energy use (through both energy-intensive production and consumer goods). With U.S. imperial decline, however, OPEC nations were able to claim a share of control and profits, and they thus dramatically changed the conditions on which energy was available to the United States (though the companies were by no means losers in the process).

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Theory and Reality

Mainstream international trade theory would lead us to expect an international equalization of wage rates, a conclusion based on the premise of a well-developed international capitalist system. It is true that historically capitalism has been the driving force of the international economy, but prior to the present era capitalism as a well-developed system—generalized wage labor, production for profit, private ownership of productive assets, market relations—was confined to a relatively small part of the globe. Even as late as the nineteenth century, capitalism still existed like clearings in a forest, surrounded by a different and often hostile environment of other forms of socioeconomic organization. In such circumstances wage workers in the capitalist centers were seldom placed in competition with workers in the periphery.

By the 1970s all this had changed. Capitalism had become a thoroughly dominant international system; the clearings had spread, and the forest had been pushed back to a few isolated clumps of trees. In many sectors of the economy, the progress of mass-production techniques allowed the ready transfer of technology. This transfer was facilitated when, as was often the case, it involved simply a relationship between the parent and subsidiary of a U.S.-based multinational firm. Finally, the great accomplishment of U.S. imperialism in the post-Second World War era was to bring a measure of stability to the international economy and break down many of the barriers to trade (though of course many barriers remained).

The impact of all these changes started to become apparent at the beginning of the 1970s, and certain categories of workers in the United States were thus placed under increasing pressure from international competition. In general, as we might well expect, these workers were people engaged in mass production, where jobs had been successfully "deskilled" and technology had been standardized. Poorly paid U.S. workers engaged in such activity—women working in assembly-type operations, for example—had little that would recommend them to an employer over even more poorly paid workers abroad. Also, workers with a higher level of skill were not safe if

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they were engaged in a mass-production activity where the technology was easily transferable. In particular, where such workers had been especially successful in obtaining wage increases, they were vulnerable. In auto and steel, where strong unions and the monopolistic positions of the principal companies had combined to provide relatively high wages, the employment and wages of workers came under severe attack.

What Happened in the 1980s?

While these emerging problems were widely recognized by the end of the 1970s, they became much more pronounced in the 1980s, as the trade situation changed in the most dramatic fashion. The overall trade deficit ballooned from $25 billion in 1980 to $122 billion in 1985 and to $160 billion in 1987 (see Figure 1). After 1981, exports stopped growing while imports continued to expand rapidly. The resulting trade deficit was huge (about 70 percent of the value of exports by 1986), historically unprecedented, and very widespread. Most categories of manufactured goods, capital goods as well as consumer goods, showed deficits.

The extreme trade shifts of the 1980s have at the very least caused considerable short-term hardships for millions of people in the United States. Moreover, when lay-offs are both highly visible and directly affected by import competition, they have a far-reaching demonstration effect. People know when a plant has been closed and a community devastated, even if the associated overall rise in the national unemployment rate is negligible. Workers in manufacturing industries can see the impact of increased import competition, and their bargaining behavior is affected.

The trade experience of the 1980s is often viewed as the exacerbated continuation of the experience of the 1970s. According to this interpretation, pressures which began to appear for certain segments of the economy in the 1970s—auto, steel, manufactured consumer goods—simply spread in the 1980s. The facts suggest that something qualitatively different was going on in the 1980s. Two particular developments of the decade stand out as proximate causes of what happened in the

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early and mid-1980s. One was the relatively slow growth of demand in the economies of U.S. trading partners; the other was the sharp rise in the value of the dollar.

Increasingly severe stagnation in various parts of the world directly undermined U.S. export markets. While 30 percent of exports went to Western Europe in 1980, the annual average growth rate for the European Community in the 1981–85 period was only 1.5 percent. In 1980, 37 percent of U.S. exports went to the "developing countries," but as the debt crisis and the turmoil in oil prices disrupted the economies of these countries, their average growth rate declined sharply in the 1981–85 period.

The important reason for the growing U.S. trade deficit of the early 1980s was of course not just that economic growth slowed in most parts of the world, but that it slowed more elsewhere than in the United States. For example, in the 1966–70 period, the European Community's GNP growth rate was 53 percent greater than that in the United States; in 1971–75 it was still 32 percent greater; but by 1976–80 it was 12 percent *less;* and in 1981–85, the European growth rate was only 60 percent of that in the United States. A similar, though not so steady, pattern characterized other parts of the capitalist world.

The consequence of this differential growth experience was that U.S. demand for foreign goods grew substantially more rapidly than foreign demand for U.S. goods, creating a tendency for the U.S. trade deficit to increase. Moreover this tendency was greatly strengthened by a rising value of the U.S. dollar during the same period. (A stronger dollar makes imports relatively cheaper and exports relatively more expensive.) Overall, when the value of the dollar peaked in the first quarter of 1985, it was 70 percent higher than it had been in the 1978–80 period. Throughout 1984 and 1985, as compared to that earlier period, U.S. exports were 50 percent more expensive to foreign buyers and foreign goods were one-third cheaper to U.S. buyers.

What explains these dramatic changes in relative growth rates and the sharp rise in the international value of the dollar?

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No single factor explains all that happened, of course, but at the center of the process was clearly the U.S. government's macroeconomic policies during the early 1980s.

The Reagan Administration, in its early years, chose to pursue its goals by the unusual combination of large federal deficits and tight money. Deficits were dictated by the administration's commitment to the otherwise contradictory goals of a rapid escalation of military spending and a reduction of taxes for corporations and the rich. Given the deficits, tight money was the only policy by which an inflation-reducing recession could then be induced. The consequence was very high real interest rates which precipitated the severe recession of 1981–82 and generated the rise in the value of the dollar, as foreign investors bought dollars in order to purchase U.S. securities and take advantage of the high returns.

In a second phase of policy, roughly coincidental with the second Reagan Administration, the government maintained the stimulus of large deficits but eased monetary policy. Growth continued—moderate by historical standards but rapid by comparison with most of the rest of the world. Moreover, the policies of the two phases were at least a partial success in one crucial respect: profit rates in the United States rose substantially following the 1982 recession. Moderate growth with relatively high unemployment was exactly what the U.S. business community wanted.

More important for the discussion here, the high interest rates in the United States, relatively favorable growth, and strong profits continued to attract foreign capital, bolstering the dollar and inhibiting any tendency of the trade deficit to decline. The movement of capital into the country was so great and so rapid that the United States shifted in a few short years from being the world's principal creditor nation to being the largest debtor nation. In 1981 the net favorable international investment position of the United States peaked at $141.1 billion, declined slightly to $137.0 billion in 1982, and then began to plummet. By the end of 1987, the net U.S. international investment position stood at minus $403 billion. Perhaps no other set of data reveals so well the extreme instability of the

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international economic relations of the United States in the current period.

Although the growing indebtedness of the United States with respect to the rest of the world is often explained as a consequence of the trade deficit, it would be equally valid to argue that the trade deficit is a consequence of the growing indebtedness. The debt and the deficit are two sides of the same coin. Foreign interests have tended to use their receipts from U.S. purchases abroad to acquire U.S. real and paper assets rather than U.S. exports. The result is simultaneously the trade deficit and the growing obligations to foreign interests.

The Basic Issues: International Instability and Stagnation

In the period since the early 1970s, the general instability of global power relations and the stagnation of the world economy have set the stage for the emergence of the severe problems that now bedevil the international economic relations of the United States. By contrast, in the quarter century following the Second World War foreign activity was a prime factor in the economic strength of the United States. In that earlier era, the overwhelmingly dominant position of the U.S. government and U.S. capital had provided a basis on which to organize and stabilize international affairs. Stability in international affairs in turn was one of the essential preconditions for the economic expansion of that period. Thus, the present problems of foreign trade and debt are a manifestation of a grand historical change, a shift from the era of extreme U.S. imperial power to the current era of imperial decline.

As part of this imperial decline, U.S. firms have faced greater competition from abroad. At the same time and paradoxically, both the strength of foreign firms and the openness of international markets that allows greater competition are consequences of the earlier U.S. imperial success.

The very process by which U.S. power declined in the late 1960s and early 1970s spread disorder in international economic relations. Attempting to maintain imperial order through its war in Vietnam and to contain urban conflict at home, the U.S. government ran substantial fiscal deficits in the late 1960s,

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financed these deficits by increasing the money supply, and thus set the stage for a great expansion of international liquidity in the early 1970s. Efforts to stave off stagnation in the 1970s through more deficits and further monetary expansion, taken together with the emergence of "petrodollars," then led to a veritable explosion of international liquidity through the Eurocurrency markets. In the absence of a system for stabilizing international monetary arrangements, the liquidity expansion was bound to wreak havoc with short-term capital movements, exchange rates, and trade flows.

A large part of the economic history of the last twenty years could be written as the story of U.S. government efforts to find ways to restore both order and U.S. power in the international economy. Through the 1970s, the focus of these efforts was on new forms of international cooperation, as the United States tried to get Japan and West Germany to play the role of partners—though certainly junior partners—in regulating international capitalism. These efforts largely failed, and with the ascendancy of Reagan to the presidency the emphasis shifted to an effort to restore U.S. hegemony.

The attempt to create a new era of unilateral U.S. power meant, first, that the U.S. government would pursue macroeconomic policies that were highly detrimental to the stability of the international economy, and other governments would be forced to adjust. Second, the restoration of U.S. power involved the huge expansion of military expenditures. The consequence was the peculiar set of macroeconomic policies described above.

Continuing Instability and Conflict

The combination of the Reagan policies, general economic stagnation, and dramatic changes in the international economic relations of the United States has been especially detrimental to U.S. workers and low-income people generally. The 1980s have seen a considerable regressive shift of income distribution, and in spite of the overall growth since 1982 average wages are still well below their peak levels of the early 1970s. (Average family incomes have almost regained their peak of the early 1970s, but only because more people per family are working.)

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Moreover, if as seems likely, the current instability leads into severe recession, there is no doubt that the greatest burden will be borne by those at the bottom of the economic ladder.

Where this situation will lead depends, of course, on larger political and economic struggles. Conflict related to the international economic difficulties are only a part of the larger struggles, but they are an important part—particularly because the trade problems of the United States are likely to persist in one form or another. There is every reason to expect a continuation of the sort of pressures which appeared in the 1970s and which most immediately affected workers in mass-production, deskilled activities. These workers will continue to be threatened by import competition. Initiatives by labor may be able to limit the process through such means as plant-closing regulation and the enforcement of other job-security provisions. Longer-term responses might fruitfully focus on limiting the prerogatives of employers to establish a technology which deskills the work process and is thus more easily transferable. Yet the roots of the problem, which lie in capital's continual search to reduce costs and raise profits, are not going to disappear any time soon.

On the other hand, the extreme trade dislocation of the 1980s is not likely to continue. It was brought about by macroeconomic policies that are not durable. An attempt to maintain those policies would run up against the willingness of foreign investors to continue to purchase dollar assets, and a flight from the dollar could result. Already, at various points in 1988, particularly following the November elections, a collapse of the dollar was avoided only through substantial intervention by foreign central banks. A shift in policy, involving either a reduction of the fiscal deficit or monetary restraint, would undermine the basis of economic growth, curtail both the U.S. demand for imports and the foreign demand for U.S. assets, and thus lead to a reduction of the trade deficit. It is not at all clear how the current situation will be resolved, but it is obvious that the status quo in the international economic relations of the United States during the 1980s cannot last.

Moreover, the imbalances in the international economic

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relations of the United States are, as I have argued, indications that things are seriously wrong in the world economy. The gravity of the situation is no secret, and the inevitability of change is widely recognized. The only question is whether the situation can be corrected by government policy. If the basic causes of the imbalances are, as I have argued, the disarray of international power relations and general economic stagnation, then "corrective measures" taken from the usual tool kit of government policy will have little impact.

To be sure, the usual tools of government policy can be employed to deal with the symptoms of fundamental problems. Expansion of the money supply can, for example, abort the consequences of a stock market crash as happened in October 1987. Yet such "corrective measures" often lead to other sorts of serious difficulties. Money expansion can fuel inflation. An attempt to reduce the imbalances through cutting the federal deficit could wipe out the defense against stagnation. The usual tools of policy simply do not include measures which could provide lasting stability to the international economy or establish a new basis for continuing economic growth.

We are, consequently, faced with three possibilities. (1) The government may continue the line of policy it has followed for the last several years, and we may then experience a more generalized crash of the financial markets, with all the cataclysmic impacts which this implies. (2) Or, through standard measures, the government could drop its policies of stimulation which have generated the imbalances, greasing the way for a slide into deeper stagnation. The cataclysm might then be avoided, but the prognosis would hardly be favorable. (3) A real alternative would go beyond standard policy and focus on more basic structural changes, changes which might deal in one way or another with both international power relations and stagnation. This third alternative itself could have many variants, ranging from the reactionary to the progressive, but at least it would open up opportunities and represent a focus for positive struggle.

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APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY: DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE

by GEORGE OVITT, JR.

On a sprawling hacienda just outside the southern Nicaraguan coastal town of San Juan del Sur, a lanky North American engineer and machinist named David Parkhurst has established a workshop for repairing windmills. In the 1930s, about 5,000 U.S.-made Chicago Motor Company windmills were constructed on Nicaragua's Pacific coast to pump water for livestock. Today, more than half of these windmills are broken, victims of time and the U.S. economic boycott. For David Parkhurst, windmill repair represents an important contribution to Nicaragua's agrarian economy: access to potable water is a problem for the rural population, especially since heavy utilization of pesticides by U.S. agro-export firms prior to 1979 polluted much of the available groundwater.

The windmills are in place; the problem is fixing them without the necessary spare parts. For example, one common problem is that the windmill towers have been bent out of alignment by the cattle that are tied to their pliable bases. Repair is difficult because of an acute shortage of timber for bracing, steel for restructuring, and welding equipment (and technicians) for replacements. Particles of grit trapped in the windmills' gears wear out ball bearings that are likewise impossible to find. Thus, thousands of windmills stand idle, a

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potentially rich technological resource in a developing nation that is struggling for economic autonomy.

While David Parkhurst seeks innovative solutions to these technical problems, other engineers and technicians work on solutions to problems faced not only by Nicaragua but by developing nations around the world. Simple solar cookers built from cardboard and aluminium foil, as well as the wonderfully efficient Lorena stove (a simple mud cookstove designed by appropriate technology in Guatemala), fulfill a vital function in a country that was long ago deforested by multinational timber companies. Biomass collection and conversion to methane offers another potential source of cheap energy while small-scale hydroelectric generators, such as the one Ben Linder was constructing in San José de Bocay, also offer the hope of cheap energy to isolated rural communities that have never had electricity.

Appropriate technology (AT) is a form of engineering rich in political possibilities. The ideas that lie behind AT—democratic empowerment, grassroots decisionmaking, economic self-sufficiency—represent a direct challenge to manipulation by transnational corporations or repressive governments. The reliance on locally produced raw materials, on preexisting resources, on local needs and local abilities, all undercut "technology transfer" with its built-in bias toward continued dependency on spare parts, foreign expertise, and expensive energy inputs. As is the case in Nicaragua, AT can help to consolidate a government's revolutionary goal of breaking the cycle of dependency on Western capital that enthralls most other Latin American nations. Thus, when Nicaraguan *campesinos* working on a cooperative north of Esteli abandoned their broken tractor and shifted back to using oxen to pull their plows and harrows, they were moving toward a more "primitive" technology, but one which is surprisingly efficient, durable, and, best of all, independent of any need for externally-produced fuel or spare parts.[1]

Most Western policymakers assume that technological progress holds the key to development for the world's poor.

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"Development" for these experts includes the importation of capital and experts, the adoption of measures to control labor and labor unions, and lower import duties. The perpetuation of dependency inherent in technology transfer allows bankers, engineers, and businesspeople—the modern conquistadors—to ensure continued control of developing nations while at the same time presenting themselves as altruists. Their assistance is usually channeled through elite institutions in the underdeveloped countries, thereby creating a development bureaucracy that is narrowly controlled, urban-based, and dependent.[2]

This "technology from above" has little to offer the masses of men and women whose daily lives are a struggle for potable water, nourishing food, and sufficient fuel. Multinational corporations and U.S. banks fund massive irrigation projects for agro-export firms, not water systems for remote villages. The promise of AT is that it can help provide the necessities of life to those living in rural communities and on the margins of urban centers. AT has the potential to transform "development" into a process that respects local needs, resources, and culture. While AT cannot bring wealth to the world's poor, it can bring the essential structure upon which a decent life is built: food, shelter, clean water, and energy.

"Appropriate" technology is, in some ways, poorly named. After all, to a nuclear engineer, a fission reactor is an "appropriate" solution to a regional energy shortage. Likewise, the most "appropriate" technological solution to a particular problem may not always respect the customs and values of a particular village: communal privies that fuel a biomass converter provide an appropriate means of producing cooking fuel, but if, as was the case in one community in rural Nicaragua, local workers find it inconvenient to leave their work and visit these privies, then centralized biomass conversion becomes quite inappropriate.

While "appropriate" technology is perhaps ambiguously named, the principles underlying AT are clear. The foundations of AT (or, as it is called in England, "intermediate technology") were prepared at a meeting held in Oxford,

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England in 1968. The idea of a humane and nonalienating community-based technology was advanced at this meeting, and then expressed in broadly accessible form in E.F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered.* Schumacher's book provides the theoretical underpinnings for the AT movement in that it examines the attitudes and assumptions underlying growth-orientated, large-scale economics. Schumacher argues for a "Buddhist economics," an economics that places human needs and well-being above commodity production: "[The modern economist] is used to measuring the 'standard of living' by the amount of annual consumption, assuming all the time that a man [sic] who consumes more is 'better off' than a man who consumes less. A Buddist economist would consider this approach excessively irrational: since consumption is merely a means to human well-being, the aim should be to obtain the maximum of well-being with the minimum of consumption."[3]

Schumacher also argues for a "technology with a human face," that is, a technology that does not deprive workers of useful and creative labor. He also argues against the technology of mass production because such technology is "inherently violent, ecologically damaging, self-defeating in terms of non-renewable resources, and stultifying for the human person." Schumacher proposes intermediate technology—intermediate between "primitive" and "super technology"—in support of "production by the masses."[4] By keeping in mind the existence of the "self-limiting principle," that is, by recognizing the need to find simple, inexpensive, and appropriate solutions to local problems, the humane engineer can offer meaningful assistance to those in greatest need. Under AT, the expert becomes a comrade, a person who lives and works with those who are sharing his or her expertise; democratic sharing of skills replaces top-down advising. Instead of being seen and treated as tenders of machines, recipients of aid, or victims of underdevelopment—all passive, helpless roles that correspond to the self-image of the Western "expert"—the people who are engaged in AT projects are active partners in development as workers, critics, or trainees.

While Schumacher described a form of "technology for

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the masses" by describing the state of mind of the appropriate technologist and the attitudes of the Buddhist economist, other AT experts have attempted to give a more precise definition to the practice of AT as it has evolved since the late 1960s. In the *Appropriate Technology Sourcebook,* Ken Darrow writes that "[AT] is especially attractive because it seems to solve a number of problems at once. Because it involves self-reliance and local production for local needs, on a national level this approach can remove from the list of obstacles to development many of the inequities of an international system that is dominated by the expensive technology and economic power of the rich countries." AT may be described as an approach to technological problem solving, one that involves the following characteristics:

—AT is low in capital costs
—AT uses local materials whenever possible
—AT creates jobs locally
—AT can be understood, controlled, and maintained by the local people who use it; continued supervision by experts is unnecessary
—AT involves decentralized, renewable energy sources (solar power, wind power, methane gas, animal power, or efficient machine power, as in the bicycle)
—AT is flexible enough to be adapted to changing local conditions
—AT does not involve patents, royalties, import duties, or consulting fees
—AT assumes collective efforts by a community rather than individual efforts[5]

Of course, one might object to this description of AT by noting that a simple and inexpensive technology has the effect of etching even more sharply the disparities between the developed and the underdeveloped worlds. It is fine to prescribe windmills as an energy source to poor people as long as it is clear that by doing so the AT expert is imposing a limit on the degree to which the windmill-powered economy can grow, on the types of products it can produce, and on the extent to which its people will emerge from poverty. AT can be condescending,

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and its practitioners must be aware of this possibility and guard against it.

While AT experts have not generally confronted this objection to their model of engineering, it is easy enough to construct their response. Certainly AT draws limits on growth and development, but these are rational limits; AT must begin with a realistic assessment of the true value of Western-style "progress" and with a deep-seated scepticism about the desirability of exporting and the environmentally toxic and socially noxious byproducts of sustained growth. However, AT, with its emphasis on local self-sufficiency in food, water, and energy, need not preclude other sorts of national or regional economic development: the windmills of Nicaragua occupy a landscape that is also dotted by sugar mills and beef processing facilities that required investments typical of "high" technology transfer. The point of AT is to offer realistic solutions to local problems; AT cannot, by definition, solve national economic problems except insofar as these problems are the sum of local needs. Further, practitioners have recognized the political fact that, however desirable large-scale industrial or manufacturing enterprises may be, rural communities have historically been unaffected by them, except in negative ways. Large plants may provide jobs, and they may even pump capital into local communities, but they do not solve precisely the problems that AT addresses: a lack of potable water, substandard housing, lack of cooking fuel, and inefficient agricultural methods (including "green revolution"–style, heavy input farming).

The kinds of benefits that may be expected to arise from successful AT projects are best understood through the consideration of a few representative projects. At the same time, these projects allow us to see the potential problems within intermediate technologies more clearly as well.

An interesting case study is provided by Kathryn Rhyner-Pozak of the Grupo Sofonias based in San Jose, Costa Rica. In a remote region of Guatemala called Baja Verapaz, adobe brick and *bajareque* (wooden pole with mud plaster) homes were destroyed by the earthquake of 1976. When it came time to

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rebuild, villagers wanted homes made of cement block—despite problems of high cost and scarcity of cement—because of their fear of another earthquake and because, in Rhyner-Pozak's words, "of advertising by the construction materials industry to enhance [cement block's] quake-proof image and exploit the widespread fear of adobe houses that existed after the earthquake."[6]

Architect Kurt Rhyner created a model of an earthquake-resistant home using the locally available (and therefore "appropriate") adobe brick, adding to it small amounts of reinforcing concrete and using interlocking corners and improved foundations. In meetings of between twenty and thirty people, Rhyner discussed a variety of building systems and made suggestions that would help villagers to construct more earthquake-resistant housing. Once the high cost of cement block ruled it out as a construction material, smaller groups of villagers met to discuss methods of meeting their housing needs with locally-available materials. With the help of AT organizers, the people planned a house that took into account the needs and financial resources of individual families; the villagers then broke up into twenty construction groups, with three or more families working on the construction of each home. Women and men together planned and executed the construction of their own as well as their neighbors' homes, and in so doing certain individuals gained considerable expertise in building technology. Because the homes cost between $600 and $700 in a region where average family income is less than $200 per year, interest-free, ten-year loans were secured from the development agency Caritas Switzerland. These loans were administered by a committee of villagers.

Adobe construction is labor intensive; it took between 150 days and a year and a half to build each home. However, the finished homes were considered "too good for *campesinos*" by a local bureaucrat—a high compliment indeed—and their construction generated capital for the local economy (for purchase of materials) and allowed fourteen masons to become experts after working on the homebuilding project for a year

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and a half. Other byproducts of the project included village cooperation on other development schemes such as improvement of water supplies, construction of vegetable gardens, and cooperative chicken farming. Apart from the initial presentation of alternative construction methods, AT experts acted primarily as consultants and as a liaison between financial backers and the community. The problems that arose centered mainly on the supply of building materials, and, as one would suspect in the context of Guatemalan political culture, on the disapproval by local officials of the project. Perhaps these officials sensed the existence of a collective spirit and a hope for improving living conditions among the citizens of Baja Verapaz—subversive ideas encouraged by appropriate technology.

Another project that demonstrates this same development of a cooperative local spirit was described to me by Mira Brown, based on her experiences in Ocotal, Nicaragua. Brown described the construction and adoption by rural *campesinas* of a fuel-efficient cooking stove that she and her colleagues had designed. In a severely deforested countryside, collecting wood for cooking fuel can occupy a considerable proportion of a woman's labor-time and/or a large amount of a family's income. The stoves, built from locally available materials by local people, operate at maximum efficiency only when the correct combination of fuel and draft are present in the firebox. Brown observed that women who had become adept at using the stove would volunteer advice to neighbors who were having problems getting a hot fire: technological troubleshooting in its most effective form. Although the stoves were resisted at first—as all sensible people should resist technical change when it threatens to overthrow traditional ways of doing things—the communal act of discussing, criticizing, and advising on one another's stoves gradually led the women to accept them as a desirable solution to a long-felt, if sublimated problem, namely, a shortage of cooking fuel. What Brown and her colleagues were able to demonstrate is the lesson that goes unlearned by most engineers and technicians: the users of technology should

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be consulted about the design of machines; traditional ways of performing tasks should be consulted and respected; technologies should fit real needs, not market-generated ones.

Other AT projects display, in varying ways, the advantages of fitting techniques to simple but compelling problems of everyday life. For example, the bicycle, that miracle of energy efficiency, has been adapted to running tablesaws, pumping water, threshing rice, corn, and cassava, and churning butter. While a large farm cannot very well provide energy for irrigation and threshing using a stationary bicycle, a family farm could, and does, in a variety of settings from Pennsylvania to Ghana and Nigeria to Malaysia. It is in the discovery of innovative uses for low-technology machines like the bicycle that AT has made some of its most important contributions.

The kind of innovative thinking that lies behind AT is demonstrated both in the development of simple, energy-efficient machines and in the discovery of unknown developmental assets. In war-ravaged Vietnam, for example, conservation efforts have become a primary concern of General Vo Nguyen Giap, former Commander of the North Vietnamese army and currently a vice-president of his country and its leading environmentalist. Giap, who cites E.F. Schumacher as an important influence on his thinking, is overseeing the planting of 500,000 acres of trees in severely deforested Vietnam; and, in a grimly "appropriate" way, Vietnamese farmers are turning some of the 25 million bomb craters left by U.S. B-52 raids into fish ponds and rice paddies.

In other parts of the developing world, the demand for wheat bread has threatened to shrink the market for traditional staples like cassava, yams, sorghum, and millet. White bread is light-textured, tasty, and confers status on its consumers—but a taste for it, particularly in tropical countries where wheat does not thrive, increases food imports and lowers the prices of other, locally produced, cereals. An appropriate solution to this problem has been the development of more interesting and tastier breads using traditional staple crops and locally producible xanthan, a thickener that works like wheat gluten.

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Appropriate technologies, like inappropriate ones, sometimes have unexpected social consequences or create new economic problems. Extending fresh-water piping from a public water source to each individual dwelling offers convenience but cuts off a source of informal communication. Alcohol substituted for gasoline can create energy independence—as was the case in Brazil—but this seemingly appropriate technology has the perhaps unexpected consequence of requiring that food crops be sacrificed so that sugar cane, the basis of the alcohol, can be produced. These and other examples illustrate the truism that all technologies carry with them a whole range of effects, only some of which are foreseen by those engineers and development experts who leave people out of their plans. Even if AT makes the mistake of neglecting non-technical factors in the adoption of a particular innovation, the AT practitioner and the AT method are both flexible enough to allow for changes in design, material, or use—changes that large-scale, high-tech solutions are generally not capable of coping with.

By itself, appropriate technology cannot solve the problems of underdevelopment, nor does it pretend to be able to do so. AT makes one little thing right, and then it moves on to the next little thing. While the purveyors of big technology—manufacturing plants that arrive complete with machinery, Western managers, pro-management unions, energy, and capital—tend to make claims that link their form of development with democracy, free enterprise, and progress, those who push AT speak in rather quieter tones about local self-sufficiency, community action, and the conservation of resources. This is only proper. AT does nothing to bridge the gap between the wealthy elites and the poor masses: it does not redistribute land, diminish racism, or dismantle the occupying armies that many underdeveloped nations deploy against their own populations. AT redirects some material resources from the industrialized nations to poorer people, but this transfer does nothing to ease the burden of debt that lays so heavily on the backs of the world's poor. The political thrust of AT is subtle, and many of its practitioners are more interested in the enticements

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of interesting engineering than in the political implications of what they do.

A realistic assessment of the political value of appropriate technology must take these facts into account. Yet for those of us who remain committed to an essential change in the world's balance of power, AT offers the promise of bringing better lives and stronger social bonds to some of the world's poor. Insofar as a proper revolutionary goal is to strengthen the poor and to weaken the rich, appropriate technology must be considered a constructive tool in the long-term struggle.

NOTES

1. For the virtues of oxen, see Peter Lawrence and Anthony Smith, "A Better Beast of Burden," *New Scientist* (April 21, 1988), pp. 49–53.
2. See D.L. Sheth, "Alternative Development as Political Practice," *Alternatives* 12, 1987), pp. 155–171.
3. E.F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 57.
4. Ibid., p. 154.
5. Adopted from the *Appropriate Technology Sourcebook* (Volunteers in Asia, Box 4543, Stanford, CA 94305).
6. See Marilyn Carr, ed., *The Appropriate Technology Reader* (New York: I.T. Development Group, 1985), pp. 113–119.

Private property alienates not only the individuality of men, but also of things. The ground and the earth have nothing to do with ground-rent, machines have nothing to do with profit.

—Karl Marx

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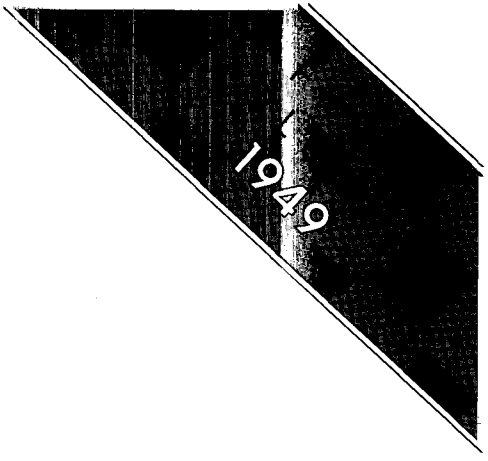

RELIGION AND SOCIALISM

by FREDERIC HASTINGS SMYTH

Merely to write the above title is to fly in the face of the religious concepts of a great many people. Because, in the minds of many who count themselves as "religious," only that which is included in the area of a "spiritual" relationship with God, which concerns man's eternal, as distinct from his temporal, destiny, and which is therefore indifferent to human judgments (or tastes) in the political and economic ordering of this present life on earth, can be properly allotted to the domain of religion. It is obvious, therefore, that before we proceed we must make clear what we mean by "religion."

In what follows, the religion of which we speak will be that which derives from the Hebrew-Christian tradition. And this religion has from the beginning invariably concerned itself with the affairs of this life. Judeo-Christian religion is this-worldly rather than next-worldly.

The ancient Jewish community of Palestine, highly conscious of its social unity in a kinship or "brotherhood," lived under a code of communal law full of economic legislation related religiously to the will of the God of Israel. The Book of Deuteronomy, for example, condemns, under high religious sanction, the exaction of interest on loans of either money or goods; it forbids the grabbing of a neighbor's land by shifting

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With the rise of liberation theology in the 1970s and 1980s, the question of religion and the Left has formed a central topic of discussion and debate in MR, most notably in a July-August 1984 double issue devoted to the question. This article by Frederic Hastings Smyth, an Episcopalian and author of *Manhood into God*, was the first piece on the topic in *Monthly Review*, published in the July 1949 issue.

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the markings of a drawn boundary; it confirms an older law freeing slaves after a fixed period of service; it makes elaborate provision for periodical redistribution of lands in such wise as to prevent the growth of a permanent landed aristocracy and the correlative formation of a dispossessed tenantry or share-cropper class. All such religious laws are intended to legislate, within the political and economic life of this world, a set of human relationships proper to men living in a social unity which can, with correctness and meaningfulness, be described as a "brotherhood." They are founded upon the clearly seen truth that men can be spiritually "brotherly" only within a community so organized and governed that "brotherliness" in material relationships is enforced by the authority of constitutional community law. And this law, in all its carefully detailed prescriptions, is gathered together in its great Summary which inseparably links all love of God to a regard for one's fellow men ("neighbors") equal at least to one's regard for oneself. The Founder of Christianity, far from denying this central commandment of the Jewish tradition, confirmed it; but he expanded the obligation to the achievement of human community beyond its historic confines in the Hebrew Nation, to embrace all men of every race and every nation.

Therefore, the religion of the Judeo-Christian tradition is by no means exclusively next-worldly in its immediate emphasis. From earliest Old Testament times, this religion has not hesitated to "meddle" or "tamper," as some people today would put it, with both politics and economics in order that the principles of "brotherhood" may be realized in the basic order of the human social structure. The very kernel of this religion is to aim at the realization of a communally structured way of life such that individualistic self-seeking shall be replaced and dominated by a system of cooperative human relationships.

In other words, in our religious tradition, no moral or ethical principles are ever put forth as if within an environmental vacuum. And still less, by far, do we ever presuppose that the social structure of man's environment shall make it categorically *impossible* to put religious principles into everyday practice. On the contrary, when we teach men that they should

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tell the truth, we presuppose an economic structure such that truth-telling will gain its due social and economic advantage in practical business and community esteem. When we teach men that they ought to give freely of their best ideas and skills for the advantage of their fellows, we presuppose a society so ordered in distributive justice that those making such contributions shall unfailingly have their due share of whatever social amenities and wealth may subsequently accrue. In brief, when we teach men that they ought to "love one another," we presuppose a social setup in which communal behavior—traditionally known as "brotherly love"—shall be constitutionally and legally enshrined. We presuppose a social structure so ordered that, when individuals do actually take their religious precepts seriously and seek to "lose their lives" in the service of their fellow men, do seek to be completely and openly truthful, do seek no material advantages either at the expense of or to the impoverishment of their fellows, they themselves will not be penalized for their so-called "self-sacrificing" generosity, but will share justly in the resulting common good. In "losing their lives" they will genuinely "find them."

It follows that the religious approach to the economic and social problems presented by our developed capitalism is not so much immediately one of moral leadership and of prophetic exhortation (although these can certainly not be absent), as it is one of scientific guidance and of social engineering for the achievement of an order such that religious principles can, at least, be put into practice in every department of life by all who are determined to do so. This does not, of course, mean that all men without exception must be motivated by religious conviction. But it does mean that those who are so motivated must not be flatly impeded, as they are now, by the objective realities of our contemporary capitalist society.

That such impediments now exist can hardly be other than obvious to any thoughtful person. It is absurd, for example, to exhort people to be consistently truthful (an undoubted element in treating others like "brothers") while at the same time permitting our sons and daughters to become advertising agents, radio announcers, or even travelling salesmen within a

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competitive capitalist structure; for in these areas of activity thoroughgoing truthfulness is penalized, not rewarded. Thus, for "religious" people with "scruples," the practical opportunities for unpenalized truth-telling are narrowed to such relatively unimportant occasions as those of mealtime pleasantries and other non-business interchanges with intimates who will not "give us away" to an outer world which, because of its basic structure, awards profits to individuals in proportion to their skill in manipulating untruths.

It is by virtue of the religious requirement that an economic environment be achieved which will make "brotherly" behavior possible at every level of activity, that religiously motivated people must now join hands with scientific socialists for the replacement of our competitive, self-seeking economy—an economy which in its very constitution exalts individualist profit-making above every other consideration—by one which seeks to make all production cooperative, one which distributes the profits of industry not on the basis of the private ownership of wealth but on the basis of the needs of all the members of the producing community considered as a whole. Socialism, thus defined, is "brotherly behavior" made socially constitutional.

There are those who teach that "unselfish" self-giving is sufficiently possible even now within our present capitalist society. Those who believe this belong to that school of thought which imagines that our present economic order—and for that matter, any human order whatever—will be "good" if men as individuals are "good" within it. Now while it is certainly true that no economic order, regardless of how well adapted it may be for the satisfaction of religious motivations, will itself be "good" unless individuals are also "good" within it, it does not follow that individual moral integrity can reform or revise a bad economic order. On the contrary, really consistent religious behavior within a capitalist order is more likely to destroy it than to improve it. Thus, religious virtues within a social structure which constitutionally contradicts them, are not palliative, but revolutionary.

This possibility of flat contradiction between the behavior patterns enforced by an economic structure and the moral

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behavior demanded by religious conscience is neither generally nor sufficiently perceived. Even the late William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, clearsighted as he usually was, drew from the fact that "commerce is one of the factors which brings nations together," the conclusion that "whether in doing so it promotes good will or ill, depends on whether we conduct it rightly or sinfully." Now, this seems to be correct as a generalization; but if applied to present practice it would take us much further than most people who accept this kind of statement usually realize. Dr. Temple continued, saying, "If you treat as competition for profit what is really cooperation for public service, something is likely to go wrong; but if we treat it for what it is, a great system of cooperation for the general benefit, it will generate good will. But if we are self-centered—which is the source of sin—and attend chiefly to our share of our interest in it, it is bound to go wrong in its working and to promote rivalries and enmities."

This type of reasoning, often repeated and assuming many forms, overlooks an obvious difficulty. Unfortunately, our present economic system is so constituted that *unless* it is "conducted for private profit," precisely then something is not only "likely," but bound to "go wrong." Our American "way of life," from its foundation up, is so organized that if individuals or groups in significant numbers were suddenly to turn "good," in the sense of conducting their business on the principle of "cooperation," if they consistently behaved as if their only intention were to give themselves in every respect to society, rather than primarily to make a profit, their own enterprises and finally the entire system would collapse. Economic chaos would ensue. Our economy works exactly the other way round; the capitalist slogan has to be: "take care of the profits and communal cooperation will take care of itself." Thus in an anti-religious economy, religiously motivated people are compelled to behave in everyday practice in anti-religious ways; or they are compelled to become revolutionary menaces to the contradictory environmental economy.

Socialism offers a rational escape from this irrational dilemma; for in the socialist economy, individuals can be

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motivated by a desire to produce the good and useful things which man's intelligence now enables him to shape from the material resources of creation, not for individual profit, but for the use of the entire community. Socialism makes no paradoxically heroic demands of "unselfishness" upon ordinary individuals; on the contrary, it is an economy so constituted that it will bestow its advantages and rewards upon those who seek to "lose themselves" in the avenues of corporate self-giving which it opens to all. It is an economy in which individuals actually stand to receive most when they behave least as competitively acquisitive beings. In this way, socialism presents a scientifically realistic answer to the religious dilemma forced upon us by the nature of capitalism. It is that very "unselfishness" now, all too contradictorally extolled by religious moralists, enshrined for the benefit of everyone in the economic constitution of a social mode of production. A motivation desired by the religious man can thus be made productive in all the practical relationships of life; for socialism permits seeking the good of the whole as a primary aim, while at the same time benefit to the individual follows as a kind of morally secondary, but none the less logical, result. Such an economic order can satisfy the religious conscience without at the same time making demands of "unselfishness" so fantastically exaggerated as to overpass the bounds of proper reason. For although it is true that in moments of crisis, the individual, like the soldier in battle, is asked to dismiss all notion of personal reward, such conditions are not looked upon as permanently desirable.

It is true that working to establish a socialist system may, in the immediate present, call for extraordinary sacrifices; but the Law of the Hebrew religion was designed to provide economic and social conditions within which the man who obeyed religious precepts there set forth might see the time when "his generation should be blessed," and "riches and plenteousness would be in his house." And when the Apostle Peter said to Jesus that he and his companions, for the sake of their common struggle and propaganda "had left everything and followed him, what should they have therefore?" the answer was not at all that such an enquiry was religiously

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irrelevant and somehow showed a morally low point of view, but rather that it was a rational enquiry, and the encouraging reply came: "Everyone who has left houses or father or mother or children or lands for me will receive an hundredfold: and there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the achievement of the kingdom of God [the Biblical name for a social order corresponding constitutionally to the will of God] who will not receive manifold more in this very time." Thus socialism is the contemporary way of following the injunction of Jesus of Nazareth to "seek first a social order of Justice"—to which he added the encouraging assurance that clothing, food, good housing and other amenities of life must then, in the very nature of the situation so achieved, "be added unto us" as logical and therefore necessary consequences. For, in diametric opposition to the capitalist slogan just suggested, that of socialism is "take care of continuing communal cooperation and the profits will take care of themselves." The capitalist approach is fairly obviously failing, even on its own terms; the socialist approach gives every indication that it both can and will fulfill its promise.

Another, and perhaps a more specifically religious, criticism which must be levelled at capitalism is that of its wanton wastefulness. A religious man necessarily entertains a deep respect for all material things, as coming from the God he worships and as being part of His creation. A religious man must therefore aim at a careful and well-considered use of this creation, aiming at the conservation of its resources which ought to be exploited for their constructive usefulness and for the benefit of man. But we today, in violent contradiction of this religious care, live in a system of waste beyond comparison. In fact, waste might be called the keystone of the structure of our material existence. Historically, our competitive capitalism, developing over five or six centuries past, has raped God's creation for man's self-regarding profit rather than exploited it intelligently for human use. Nobody who has travelled thoughtfully over our own country but must be saddened by our ruthlessly slashed forests in many an old lumbering area; by the blackened and blighted countryside and streams of our coal mining

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districts; by our western bad lands, with their fertile top-soil lost beyond recall because of avaricious and careless use; by our "dust bowl" caused by profit-mongering grain planting during the first world war. All these desolations are but the stigmata of human activity without thought for humanity and its future; without any thought, in fact, beyond the quickly amassed profit for a small minority, and then but for a few fleeting years.

But the evil goes deeper. We even produce for the sake of waste! It is our very aim and purpose to have all our manufactured goods used up as soon as possible, to get them worn out or tossed away long before they have ceased to have utility. One need not multiply examples of this waste thus carefully contrived and socially engineered by the meretricious advertising propaganda showered upon us through every avenue of public expression. The great thing is to get everyone to buy, and then to buy more and more; to buy more and to throw away; to buy beyond all rational need and the possibility of constructive use.

But even these methods of waste do not suffice to drain away what are so quaintly called the products of "over-production" made possible by present day techniques. We are compelled from time to time during periods of peace to resort to government support of prices, while many of our citizens cannot buy sufficiently for their needs even at lower prices; and we resort to government subsidy of waste and destruction, especially of foodstuffs, in order to prevent the ruin of our producing farmers and to keep them abreast of other business in the mad scramble for profits. All of this is accompanied by human waste, by so-called "depression" unemployment and the profane discarding of many of our best resources in human beings themselves.

At last the problem of "over-production" which wipes out capitalist profits becomes insoluble on a domestic basis and within the framework of international peace. No peacetime waste can be contrived, either through propaganda or subsidy which will solve it. Nations which come to this final crisis do not immediately make open declaration of the sinister plans now deeply maturing for further waste and destruction of their "surplus" manufactured and agricultural goods. At first they

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begin to lend money abroad that other more depressed nations may buy these "surplus" products and drain them away. This can be achieved sometimes through private loans, as after the First World War; or through "Marshall Plans" and E.R.P. bounties, as at present. But finally even these means cannot suffice. Loans and gifts for economic "recovery" slip logically over into rearmament programs both at home and abroad—always, of course, avowedly for the "preservation of peace." Then the time comes when the capitalist world goes in for waste on the grandest and most satanic scale, with bombs and fire, that a new cycle of profit-making and inflationary production may start another irrational competitive rush.

To a religious man, this is a grave sacrilege. All intelligent men, whether or not they profess any explicit religious faith, must grieve over the dreadful sacrilege of such waste. But religious men ought to be filled with a contrite fear at this ghastly spectacle of man's desecration of God's created world, a world given for man's welfare and not to be exhausted for the competitive profit of a few, nor ruined in the cause of man's subsequent self-destruction.

There is ground for rejoicing that what is probably an entirely new factor has entered the contemporary religious scene. For the first time in history it now dawns upon the religious consciousness that what is called sin does not reside exclusively in the selfish wrong-headedness and perverted wills of individual men. Sin can be enshrined in a social structure, as in our present one, in a way which can vitiate the best intentions of the very saints themselves. Our religious forebears never clearly comprehended this truth, although the laws and precepts of their religion had from the beginning pointed the way to it. This lack of understanding has had disastrous results; for it has caused religious people to come to terms with evil economic arrangements looked upon as somehow fixed and humanly unalterable, perhaps even thought to be sent from God! One way out of this difficulty has been to turn "religion" into mere individualist and private piety and to make its concern a next-worldly one utterly foreign to the Judeo-Christian tradition. But the modern development of scientific

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socialism opens a new door of hope to all religious people. The fresh and well-grounded assurance that, as Karl Marx put it, men can have a rational part in making their own history, shows us that we need no longer "adjust" ourselves as best we may to an anti-brotherly economic system, but can, instead, mold it, to the end that future history may approach nearer to the requirements of our own basic religious motivations. This is the vast contribution which socialist economics is currently making to the cause of religion.

And in return for this, the religious man can affirm, to the hope of humanity and the confusion of cynical skeptics, that human nature at its most rational is basically cooperative. However much men's motivations have been misguided and perverted in a non-cooperative (i.e. non-brotherly) and irrational competitiveness, we will come to our full stature as truly rational and truly human beings, will do our finest work and live our most productive lives, when a socialist structure permits us to lay aside an imposed jungle mentality and to realize unimpeded our properly cooperative social selves.

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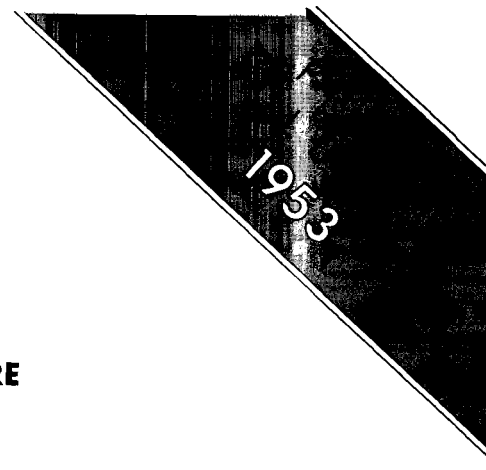

MARXISM AND LITERATURE

by F.O. MATTHIESSEN

The only portion of the indictment where my testimony could have any relevance would be in relation to the teaching of "the principles of Marxism-Leninism" through books and classes. In that connection two points should be made: (1) that these "principles" are very different from what the indictment implies, and (2) that no "principles" can be stamped out by suppression, and that it is against the whole American tradition of freedom of thought and expression even to attempt such suppression. The second of these points has already been well argued by the Civil Liberties Union, so I shall confine my remarks here to the first.

I would argue that "the principles of Marxism-Leninism" are revolutionary primarily because Marx and Engels were two of the most profound thinkers of the nineteenth century. They were pioneers in grasping the fact that the industrial revolution had brought about—and would continue to bring about—revolutionary changes in the whole structure of society. By cutting through political assumptions to economic realities, they revolutionized the way in which thinking men regarded

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This essay by the great scholar, teacher, and critic F.O. Matthiessen, who played an important role in the founding of MR, was published a few years after his death, in the March 1953 issue. Matthiessen originally wrote it to use as testimony for the defense in the Foley Square trial, the first trial of Communists under the Smith Act. But he was never called as a witness and never subsequently used the paper. When it was found and made available to MR in 1953, it was published along with the following note: "At a time when the witch hunt in the colleges and universities is reaching new heights, we commend to the attention of educators and witch hunters alike this calm appraisal of the importance of Marxism by a great critic and teacher."

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modern society. For example, consider the testimony of Henry Adams, grandson and great grandson of two Presidents of the United States: "Sooner or later the process of education would have to deal with Karl Marx much more than with Professor Bowen of Harvard College." Or again, referring to how he responded to his age by becoming a Darwinist, he continued: "By rights, he [that is, Adams himself] should have been also a Marxist, but some narrow trait of the New England nature seemed to blight socialism, and he tried in vain to make himself a convert."

Since Adams' time "the principles of Marxism-Leninism" have become so inextricably a part of general thought that it would be impossible to excise them. Educated men of the twentieth century have drawn upon them in the same spirit that they have drawn upon whatever other science and philosophy can enable them to understand our world. Marxism-Leninism has furnished valuable tools of analysis to many American thinkers and scholars. To cite two leading examples: Thorstein Veblen, probably our greatest contributor to sociological theory, and Vernon Parrington, whose *Main Currents of American Thought* has been the most influential book for students of our intellectual history during the past two decades. In reading Veblen one can see how Marx's insights challenged him again and again to formulate different conclusions of his own. The year after Parrington had published his Pulitzer prize-winning volumes, he made a summary of his intellectual position in which he said: "I was a good deal of a Marxian." To be sure, he was even more of a Jeffersonian, but he recognized that there were many areas in which our revolutionary tradition and the European revolutionary tradition were in accord, that a modern American could learn from Marx and the Russian Revolution as Jefferson had learned from Rousseau and the French Revolution.

This implied what younger American scholars like myself who have been influenced by Veblen and Parrington and who have also lived through the 1930s and 1940s should well know: that the one best way to avoid a further revolution in this country is to meet the challenge of Marxism by continual

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further extensions of economic democracy at home. I am a Christian, and consequently, though a socialist, I have never been a Marxist in any sense. But as a student primarily of literature and cultural history, my debt to Marxism-Leninism has been great and inescapable. As Professor Howard Mumford Jones has summed up the influence of this body of thought in his recent book, *The Theory of American Literature:* "What Marxian interpretation has done, it seems to me, notably in the instances of V. F. Calverston, Granville Hicks, and Bernard Smith, has been to compel the academic historian to remember that the bibliographical and aesthetic worlds are set in universes of economic and social discourse, to remember that taste is not a private matter but a public charge, and, particularly in the American field, to include in literary history much that was once regarded as beneath the dignity of scholarship."

The value of Marxism-Leninism for my own thought has lain chiefly in its rigorous insistence upon the primary importance of economic factors in society, in driving home the fact that unless the problems rising from the economic inequalities in our modern industrialized society were better solved we could not continue to build democracy. As a deep admirer of Walt Whitman, I believe that "man becomes free not by realizing himself in opposition to society but by realizing himself through society." That sentence might have been written by Whitman, but it was actually written by Christopher Caudwell, a young English Marxist who was killed fighting for the Loyalists in Spain. His book, *Illusion and Reality,* has been one of the strong critical influences upon younger students and writers in the past decade. Marxism-Leninism continues to be the groundbase of much of the best social and cultural thought of our century. No educated American can afford to be ignorant of it, or fail to realize that there is much common ground between its "principles" and any dynamic and growing democracy.

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CORRESPONDENCE

"INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION—A WAY OUT?": A COMMENT

by Kathleen Gough

I was deeply impressed by the editors' analysis of international competition and historical contradictions among capitalist nation-states (MR, November 1987). I would like to record some thoughts which sprang from reading their article.

Although they have often written of them in other places, in this article the editors did not mention two salient features of the modern world. One, of course, is the fact that more than a third of the world now belongs to the states of "actually existing socialism." Although closely linked to and affected by the capitalist camp, they are not part of it and they operate differently.

The other feature is that since the Second World War, nuclear energy, automation, and cybernetics have enormously expanded the forces of production in the industrial states, both capitalist and socialist. The world of today is thus very different from that of either 1914 or 1939. I would argue that these differences herald the end not only of capitalism, but also of actually existing socialism and ultimately, of the nation-state itself.

We may define the state as a society having a centralized power which possesses a monopoly of force and governs through the medium of territorial groups.

Beginning about 5,000 years ago, the state appears to have emerged independently out of loosely organized chiefdoms in six regions—Egypt, Mesopotamia, the northwest of the Indian subcontinent, North China, Mesoamerica, and the Andes. The rise of these primary states and the spread, from them, of secondary states eventually encompassing the whole world, marked a profound change in the evolution of human society and culture. I would argue that this whole

Kathleen Gough is an anthropologist who has written extensively on Southeast Asia, particularly Vietnam.

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stage of cultural evolution has become obsolescent and, within perhaps a century or so, may draw to a close.

From their inception, states have been class societies whose ruling classes have competed with those of other states (or, at the beginning, with neighboring tribes or chiefdoms) for control over scarce resources, means of production, goods, and people. The ruling classes were able to carry on this competition because they succeeded in controlling their own subordinate classes with respect to (a) the waging of war and (b) work and the products of labor. Through their control of labor and goods, they were able to feed their armies and other specialists, accord themselves the economic surplus and privileges they thought appropriate to their rank, and dispense some benefits to a portion of their populations by means of redistribution and trade.

The organization of classes in states appears to have been of five main types. Under the Asiatic or tributary mode of production, the earliest type, kin-based communities of peasants and artisans collectively came under the control of a centralized state apparatus whose officials themselves formed the ruling class. In the "Ancient Society" of Greece, Rome, and elsewhere, by contrast, a ruling class of private proprietors emerged whose members owned both the labor and the persons of slaves. Under feudalism, the lords of private estates extracted surplus from serfs who were attached to the land and controlled plots of it for their private subsistence while also laboring on their lords' demesnes. Under capitalism, as is well known, the labor of "free," largely propertyless workers on behalf of private owners of the means of production superseded both serfdom and slavery as well as the communal peasant production of tributary states.

The states of actually existing socialism present problems because they claim, and at first try, to be classless societies, and because they do institute a greater measure of equality and universal welfare than any previously existing states. At the least, they *aspire* to classless society, which the authorities of no other mode of production have done before. It seems, however, that they cannot truly abolish classes as long as they are organized as states, with their need to control labor, centralize the collection surplus, and prepare for war in order to ward off attacks from other states. At all events, high officials of the state apparatus in these societies do in fact still control the work of their fellow citizens, can still coerce them to make war, and in most countries enjoy a part of the surplus that they extract from subordi-

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nate workers. It is noteworthy that most of the existing socialist states emerged in societies which were based on the Asiatic or tributary mode of production until about one to three centuries previously. This heritage has influenced their structures, although these have, of course, been profoundly modified to the benefit of their citizens.

I would argue that since the end of the Second World War, the exploitation of nuclear energy and the development of automation and cybernetics, as well as advances in chemistry, engineering, and other areas of "high tech," have begun to undermine the nation-state structure with respect to both war and work, as well as to natural resources and means of production.

With respect to war, it is now widely recognized that "nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought," since it would destroy most living creatures. And as Mikhail Gorbachev has pointed out, even a "conventional" large-scale war can no longer be fought among the industrial states because the destruction of nuclear power plants in such a war would kill outright a large proportion of the populations of Europe and North America and poison much of the rest of the world. The industrial capitalist states thus cannot engage in a third world war as a way out of economic stagnation, depression, and mutual competition unless they are prepared to blow up the planet. They must find some other means of exit from the economic and political dilemmas the editors of MR have so cogently described.

With respect to work, automation and cybernetics coupled with industrial society's greatly increased exploitation of energy are making some forms of work unnecessary and others potentially less arduous and time-consuming than in previous ages. They also make plenty potentially available to all. Yet in the capitalist industrial states, the numbers of the poor and homeless are alarming and are growing. There are now permanently unemployed populations in these states, some of whose members can only be controlled through paramilitary force or plentiful distributions of drugs. At the same time, some forms of work required by modern capitalism (e.g. military service and production, advertising, some services) are at best unnecessary and at worst harmful to workers and to society. Such an irrational state of affairs can surely not continue indefinitely.

In the peripheral capitalist states, unemployment is massive and increasing and conditions for the majority are deteriorating. This situation, too, is wholly irrational and is likely to give rise to explosions.

In the socialist camp, the leadership of the Soviet Union has recognized that the mode of production that was developed over the

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last seventy years acts as a brake on production, especially on the scientific and technological revolution on which they, too, have embarked. While it does not do away with centralized authority, *perestroika* promises more democratic and decentralized management of enterprises and greater control by workers of their products and the conditions of their lives.

In both camps, modern technology is giving rise to widespread disasters on lands, in the oceans, and in the stratosphere. These dangers demand worldwide controls and cooperation if the planet and its inhabitants are to be saved from destruction.

In both camps, therefore, it is clear that in Marx's words, "the material forces of society [have] come into conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces, these relations [have] turn[ed] into their fetters." And so must begin "an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed."[1]

In an article published in 1964, I argued that the only way out of the nation-state crisis (which at that date was much less acute) was an organized, cooperative world society. This society, however, would not be a world state, for it would have no competitors, no armies apart from small peacekeeping forces, and one hopes, eventually no exploitation nor social classes.[2]

It seems that Gorbachev and his colleagues are thinking along the same lines, although of course with greater knowledge and profundity than I was able to do. Thus, in conjunction with his proposals for the restructuring of Soviet society, Gorbachev is calling on the governments of the industrial states to surrender part of their sovereignty to the United Nations, which, he argues, must assume responsibility for monitoring both nuclear and conventional disarmament, planning and providing for world health and ecological safety, promulgating and maintaining universal human rights, and instituting a New Economic Order which will put an end to international exploitation and unequal trade.

I must admit that these noble proposals remind me a little of Shakespeare's Owen Glendower, who in *Henry IV*, boasted, "I can call spirits from the vasty deep"—to which Hotspur replied, "Why so can I and so can any man, But will they come when you do call for them?"

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Certainly, the editors of MR have pointed out, the ruling classes of the industrial capitalist states are in no mood at present to forgo their profits or surrender their sovereignty.

Nevertheless, I have some hopes. The people of the Western states have already shown that most of them want world peace and disarmament, to the point where even Reagan has been obliged to make at least minimal moves in that direction.

The success or failure of *perestroika* in the socialist states, and of socialist liberation movements in the capitalist periphery, are of course of crucial significance. If, in the next few decades, the socialist states can restructure themselves democratically, make over some of their present powers to the United Nations, and further implement the New Economic Order that they are trying to institute in relation to a number of Third World states, these changes must surely have a profound effect on the whole world. The people of the West may at last be convinced that socialism really is superior to capitalism and that it can lead to a prosperous and harmonious (in reality, a communist) world. If, at the same time, the financial collapse and economic depression that the editors foresee really happen in the capitalist camp, the lesson may be learned more quickly, although through painful and bitter struggles. In any case, humanity cannot again go through the cycle of long-term stagnation, international competition leading to world war, and subsequent reconstruction of the capitalist order, in the ways that it did the last two times around. Something new must grow, the seeds of which may already have been sown.

NOTES

1. Karl Marx, "A Preface to the Critique of Political Economy," *Marx-Engels Selected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1958), p. 383.
2. Kathleen Gough: "The Crisis of the Nation State," in Roger Fisher, ed., *International Conflict and Behavioral Science* (New York: Basic Books, 1964), pp. 41–69.

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WOLFF AND RESNICK DEFENDED

by Ronald Chilcote

I write in defense of the work of Richard C. Wolff and Stephen A. Resnick. Their *Economics: Marxian versus Neoclassical* was reviewed unfavorably by W.H. Locke Anderson ("A Civics Lesson," *Monthly Review*, May 1988), but MR readers should take a close look at this work as well as the authors' more important *Knowledge and Class: A Marxian Critique of Political Economy* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), and the new journal *Rethinking Marxism*, founded by Resnick and Wolff along with other colleagues.

There are several problems with Anderson's review. First, he does not reveal the substance of Wolff and Resnick's book, how they distinguish between Marxism and neoclassical theories and the origins and evolution of these theories. Anderson alludes to the influence of Althusser and other philosophers whose "correct" theories presumably have tainted the work of Resnick and Wolff, but he obscures both content and intent. Second, Anderson misses altogether the pedagogical purpose of juxtaposing Marxian and neoclassical theories. Wolff and Resnick's *Economics* is an introductory text designed to show readers that differences between these theories are real and meaningful. A friend who has been struggling to understand Marx and Marxian theory recently read this text and emerged with a clear understanding that now allows her to work more comfortably in a Marxist tradition. In my own teaching, I have learned that students are more receptive to Marxism once they comprehend its radical critique of mainstream conservative and liberal ideas, but they must also understand that mainstream Marxism shows that there is a powerful alternative way to ask questions about bourgeois society and to seek meaningful solutions. Third, Anderson ignores Wolff and

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Resnick's thesis that Marxian theory is a class theory: "Marxian explanations" they write, "focus on the class aspects, class causes, and class consequences of social life." (*Economics*, p. 21) How refreshing to be reminded that analysis of class and class struggle can be anti-reductionist and anti-essentialist!

The contribution of Wolff and Resnick is their effort to resurrect and build Marxism in the face of the declassing of the socialist project by intellectuals who have moved on to post-liberalism (see Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Capitalism and Democracy*) and post-Marxism (see Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*).

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BOOKS

A COUPLE OF RADICALS

by Anne Braden

Harvey and Jessie, A Couple of Radicals, by Jessie Lloyd O'Connor, Harvey O'Connor, and Susan M. Bowler. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988. 259 pp. $24.95.

I wish every young person attracted to current social justice movements would read this book. It's a great antidote to a very different kind of story that now seems fashionable in novels, memoirs, movies, and TV productions: sagas of young radicals of the 1960s, now burnt out in their forties, turned inward in a dreary search for themselves, deciding that their youthful crusades were either futile or a mistake.

I don't think these sad stories are typical of those who became active in the 1960s, or in any other decade. I know too many people whose commitment was and is for a lifetime. It seems more likely that the stories of disillusionment are what publishers want to print, and moviemakers want to depict.

In any event, it was surely different with Harvey and Jessie O'Connor.

Harvey first encountered socialism as a working-class high school student in Tacoma, Washington, in 1912. He deepened his political education in the brutal logging camps of the Northwest,

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Anne Braden is a journalist who has been active in Southern social-justice movements for forty years. She now serves as co-chair of the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice (SOC), is a member of the executive committee of the National Rainbow Coalition, and is active in numerous other justice and peace groups.

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where he joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the years before the First World War as a writer for socialist papers in that period; his radicalization continued with the Seattle General Strike of 1919, when he was charged (but not arrested—they never caught him) with criminal anarchy.

When he died in 1987 at the age of ninety, having struggled for labor rights, civil liberties, and world peace for seventy-five years, Harvey was as firmly committed to socialism as he had been at age fifteen. Immobilized physically by arthritis in his last years, he used his old manual typewriter (he never wanted an electric) to continue sending forth his ideas as long as his ravaged fingers could move. And he encouraged a steady stream of young visitors to seek lives of political adventure on the road to an egalitarian society.

Jessie Lloyd O'Connor came from a very different background—a Winnetka, Illinois, family who had inherited part of the *Chicago Tribune* fortune. But she was also a descendent of Henry Demarest Lloyd, the writer who exposed corporate corruption in the nineteenth century, and radical reform was a part of the family tradition. Jessie learned about the possibilities of a new world from a wealthy socialist father, William Lloyd. She absorbed independence from her mother's Texas family, the Mavericks, and feminism and commitment to world peace from her suffragist peace-activist mother, Lola Maverick Lloyd. She leaped into the class struggle at age twenty-one, when she visited London during the 1926 General Strike and attempted to cover it truthfully for various publications. Ever since, in a long career as a labor journalist and activist, she's been an uncompromising partisan for the oppressed.

Today Jessie is eighty-four, now completely blind, and immobilized physically since fracturing her hip in 1987, but also still prolifically typing out her observations. (Unlike Harvey, she uses the touch system, a help now that she is blind, and *she* finally did buy an electric). Her most recent work was a cogent two-page summary of the devastating effects of the redistribution of wealth to the rich under eight years of Reaganism, which she mailed out to a carefully-built mailing list in October, 1988, just in case anyone had been thinking of staying away from the polls on November 8th.

Because of their contrasting backgrounds, Harvey and Jessie were an unlikely couple when they married in 1930, at ages thirty-three and twenty-six. But they shared a commitment to the written word—and to a new and just world. "It wasn't that we had no problems, but that we could work on them," Harvey writes. Their

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marriage, ended only by Harvey's death, was a cooperative journey—one, as this account makes clear, as joyous as it was significant, because Harvey and Jessie also shared a belief that revolutionaries should have fun along the way.

And just as they cooperated in social struggles over almost sixty years, they cooperated in the production of this remarkable book. It's a joint autobiography, woven together skillfully with the help of freelance writer Susan M. Bowler, from their written memoirs, some oral history, plus many old leaflets, newspaper articles, and pamphlets. Three chapters are in Harvey's words; the two alternating ones in Jessie's.

I am one of many social-justice activists who have been privileged to know Harvey and Jessie as very dear personal friends. We encountered each other in the early 1950s in what I call the "resistance movement" to the repression of that decade. Harvey was struggling to stay out of jail after a confrontation with Senator Joe McCarthy, and in the process was leading the fight to end what the senator represented. My husband Carl and I were having our own problems with the witch hunt. There was an immediate and deep *esprit de corps* among all of us who were fighting back in those days.

Starting in 1956 and for almost twenty years, Carl and I and our children spent a month each summer in a little cottage on the property Harvey and Jessie owned on a beautiful rocky coast at Little Compton, Rhode Island. Those sojourns were probably what enabled us to stay in the social-justice movement, and we were only two of many who went there to recharge tired batteries. The O'Connors shared their beautiful home with assorted radicals and activists, who peopled the place in droves every summer. I recall one Sunday morning when Carl went out to get the morning paper and came back commenting, "I counted forty-five bodies on these premises." That was when antinuclear activists who were climbing on submarines in New London were resting up on the O'Connor lawn, and Carl's count didn't include a score or so more guests sleeping inside.

But strangely, despite all those summer visits (and I still don't feel a year is complete unless I get to Little Compton for at least a few days), until I read this book I knew very little about the O'Connors' early years in the labor movement, when they were working and writing on the tense and often violent frontlines of this nation's raw class struggle.

When we came to know Harvey and Jessie, they were still very

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active. Harvey was writing his books on the oil industry, *Empire of Oil* and *World Crisis in Oil*, issued by Monthly Review Press. (Mainline publishers who had acclaimed his earlier studies of America's great fortunes, such as *Mellon's Millions*, gave in to the witch hunt and rejected him.) He was also speaking throughout the country, leading the fight that ultimately succeeded in abolishing the House Un-American Activities Committee. Jessie was taking part in every peace and civil rights demonstration and writing new pamphlets on socialism.

But that was all in the winters. In the summers, they opened their big house at Little Compton and hosted the masses who descended. And they listened much more than they talked. Each afternoon, all the guests gathered on a big porch overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and later around a huge table in the dining room. Harvey, a generation older than I, seemed to me very much the elder statesman even then; he would sit, for the most part quietly, listening intently as vociferous and sometimes loud arguments raged, about events of the day and various theories of the Left. When he broke his silence, it was usually to snort derisively at what he felt were minor points that created divisions among radicals. He detested internecine warfare on the Left.

As for Jessie, it was considered among the guests something of an accomplishment to catch her sitting down long enough for a conversation. She was constantly busying herself in the kitchen to ensure that everybody was well-fed; putting together a boat trip to a nearby island; organizing lively folk dancing in the big living room after dinner; working in her garden, which always produced a steady flow of vegetables; or running to the ocean for a quick round of surfing on the waves.

Having been well-trained in succinct journalistic writing, Jessie thought we all talked too much. I remember her response after hearing that one late-night session had gone on until four in the morning. She commented drily, "I'll bet somebody repeated themselves." Everybody had their favorite "Jessie stories." Mine was about the day we all came in filled with excitement because one of us had saved a young woman from drowning in an especially stormy sea. Jessie was standing at the kitchen door listening, and then we saw a streak go by. It was Jessie dashing off to the ocean with her surfboard. If someone had almost drowned, she knew it was a good time for surfing.

As she recounts in this joint autobiography, Jessie's father always said he'd rather see his children dead than afraid. Jessie was

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painfully shy as she grew up—a handicap that she says she overcame with the help of the "frankness and warmth" of Russian friends during a visit to the young Soviet Union in the 1920s—but she never really feared anything. That stood her in good stead, when soon after she and Harvey were married he sent her a telegram saying that the correspondent for Federated Press had just been shot in Harlan County, Kentucky, during the mine wars. "Can you resist taking his place?" Harvey's telegram asked.

Jessie went, and she vividly recounts in this book the events there, as she does those during the earlier bloody textile strike in Gastonia, North Carolina. By that time, Harvey and Jessie were both working for Federated Press, which is how they met. Federated Press was a labor news service that for several decades provided information on workers' struggles that the capitalist press would not. Like so many valuable institutions, it was destroyed in the 1950s.

Harvey learned to write crisp factual copy working for the socialist and IWW press in the Northwest during the zenith of militant radicalism and labor activity in that region before and after the First World War. Born in Minnesota to parents he never knew, he was adopted as a baby from a foundling home by a railroad chef and his wife. She was a strong woman, who ran a rooming house to support the family after they moved to the state of Washington when Harvey was about thirteen, when his father, broken by cruel conditions on the railroad, could no longer work. As Harvey realized later, his mother put up a Herculean struggle to make it possible for him to finish high school, and he credits the Tacoma High School with giving him such a good education that he was "spared the waste of college years."

The rest of his education he got from the IWW, socialists, and early Communists around Seattle, Tacoma, and other points in the Northwest. After he finished high school, his mother was becoming frail, and it was up to him to work. He became a "flunkey" (waiter) in the inhumane logging camps. Later he worked on such radical publications as the socialist *Seattle Daily Call* (circulation, 10,000), and the *Union Record*, also a daily (circulation, 70,000).

In this book, he describes in vivid detail the glorious time of the 1919 Seattle General Strike, which he considers one of "American labor's proudest moments." (The strike is depicted in more detail in Harvey's *Revolution in Seattle*, published by Monthly Review Press.) The autobiography also includes a deeply moving account of the repression of the IWW, including the sacking of its hall in Centralia,

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Washington, in 1919 by the American Legion, and the brutal lynching of one of its activists.

This book contains virtually none of the introspection that pervades accounts of disillusioned radicals, past and present. Harvey and Jessie don't really attempt to tell us just what in their psyches enabled them to wend their way through the ups and downs of the nation's radical movement, shifting tactics here and there but never losing faith in the ultimate goal of a just (and socialist) society. They let their lives speak for themselves.

In one short clue, Harvey comments that, "I was brought up in a working-class family where the choice was work or starve. This saved me later from an agonizing search for my identity; I never had much time for scrutinizing my navel."

Interestingly, Jessie seemed not to have time for that either. Among the things her life proves is that a person born to wealth and privilege can indeed change class allegiance. Perhaps the key is her capacity, which becomes very clear in this book, to shunt aside whatever she read in the capitalist press and even the theories she heard from radicals, and listen to what people struggling to survive were saying. That's what she did as a reporter in Harlan, Gastonia, and later in the steel towns devastated by the Depression in western Pennsylvania.

That ability made her, like Harvey, a top-notch labor journalist; it also apparently set her direction for life. It was a capacity that was still very evident in the years I came to know her. I recall one morning at Little Compton, when Jessie sat down long enough for a conversation, and the talk turned to the new Cuba, from which some of the summer visitors had recently returned. They were deploring what they said was the "grimness" of life there.

Jessie listened a while and then said: "That's not what I saw when I was there a few months ago. I saw people singing and laughing as they traveled to the fields, taking their Sunday holiday to volunteer to cut cane."

Jessie was about sixty then. She was still listening to people, as she had in her twenties, when someone asked her if she believed in class struggle. "I don't believe in it; I see it," she says she replied. Like Harvey, she decided early which side of that struggle she was on. Like him, she has never doubted her choice.

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(Continued from inside front cover)

the European Community." The situation in the other countries of Europe is less extreme, but remarkably similar. A similar reaction would hardly be surprising.

A comrade from Chile visited us the other day with disturbing news from her homeland. Despite the resounding NO vote in last fall's plebiscite—denying Pinochet an extension of his term as president—the situation in the country has improved very little if at all. Killings and disappearances of political opponents continue, and power remains securely in the hands of the military dictatorship. Too many people outside Chile, our visitor told us, believe that the plebiscite, which drew headlines around the world, signalled the return of democracy in Chile. Not so, she emphasized. The struggle for democracy still lies ahead, and the Chilean people need all the moral and material support they can get from supporters everywhere, not least in the United States.

Our old and valued friend Jim Aronson, one of the founders of what is now *The Guardian* and was then *The National Guardian* (the other two were Cedric Belfrage and the late Jack McManus), died on October 21 after a long struggle against cancer. As it happens, October 20th was the date *The Guardian* celebrated its fortieth anniversary with a highly successful dinner. We, along with many other friends and admirers of Jim, attended a moving memorial meeting on December 4th at Hunter College where he had been a professor of journalism in recent years. As we wrote in this space last May on the occasion of NYU's Center for War, Peace and the News Media awarding Jim its annual Olive Branch Award for Special Lifetime Achievement, he was "a wonderful human being and a deeply committed radical humanist."

Our old friend (from Vol. 1, No. 1 days) Hank Mayer is giving the University of Vermont his collection of Scott Nearing's books, pamphlets, and letters together with a complete file of "World Events," written and published independently by Scott before it was taken over by *Monthly Review*, where it ran monthly (with occasional exceptions) as a "column" by Scott from April 1953 to June 1972—nineteen years and a total of 200 columns. But Hank needs six of Scott's books to make the collection complete. These are: *A Solution of the Child Labor Problem*, *Elements of Economics*, *Community of Civics* (with J. Field), *Financing the Wage Earner's Family*, *Social Religion*, and *Law of Social Revolution*. MR readers who have any of these books they are willing to part with should contact C.H. Mayer, P.O. Box 1335, Manchester Center, VT 05255.

A group of MR readers have a discussion group going in the Los Angeles area. If you are interested, please contact Stephan Katzan, at 213-785-0703.

We are pleased to announce that an MR book, *David and Goliath: The U.S. War Against Nicaragua*, by William I. Robinson and Kent Norsworthy, has been given the Outstanding Book Award by the Gustavus Myers Center for books published in 1987 on the subject of intolerance in the United States.

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